

# **THE ASIANADIAN**

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AN ASIAN CANADIAN MAGAZINE



**FACE TO FACE WITH WAYNE WANG**

**IN MIXED COMPANY**

**RACIAL HARASSMENT:  
INDIVIDUAL REFLECTIONS**

**ASIAN FILMS AT THE  
FESTIVAL OF FESTIVALS**

**TORONTO'S INDIA BAZAAR**



# **Is the ASIANADIAN Losing Its Appeal?**

**Let's  
Talk  
Dollars  
And  
Sense...**

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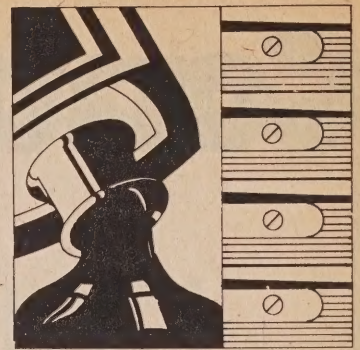
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# Editorial



Many feel the *Asianadian's* view of reality has been refracted through the prism of racist ideology. We have been unduly accused of being 'radical', 'sensationalistic', if you will--that we dwell too heavily on themes of oppression which we have approached and consequently attacked and dissected from numerous perspectives. Moreover, as a magazine whose objectives include the promotion of cross-cultural understanding, we are seen as undermining its efforts and are therefore subverting the *Asianadian's* aims with negative portrayals of Asians as the victims of history. Some readers feel that we should adopt a more 'positive' stance. Those who are quick to criticize, however, are slow to concede that as the seminal Asian Canadian publication, we too must undergo stages of development in which we grow and progress with the changing times.

It is not necessary to reiterate our position on racism. As an anathema to all Asian Canadians, its affects are immediate and emotional. But we of the *Asianadian* are not so myopic that we do not realize there are issues, in addition to oppression based on race, which concern us, and that these too must be considered.

The *Asianadian's* mandate does not outline that controversial issues must be the order of each publication. The articles herein are not explosive, overly dramatic or particularly controversial, but they do offer a broader perspective and are more encompassing of the aims of the *Asianadian*.

As of late, Asians have been the subject of considerable, and dare we say, favourable attention from the media. A cursory reading of this issue reflects this growing phenomenon. But before one becomes totally lost in a false sense of euphoria over 'having made it', we must evaluate the current situation more carefully.

In all fairness, the positive tones of the articles are overshadowed by the negative realities. At the "Visible Minorities and the Media Conference" held recently in Toronto, the Minister of Multiculturalism expressed the same sentiments we have long espoused --that Asians and visible ethnics have been highly underrepresented in all sectors of mass communication. Ironically, however, the media failed to pick up on the fact that the representatives of the ethnic 'minorities' were arbitrarily chosen at the discretion of the organizers to the exclusion of those grass-roots voices, many of whom were responsible for the setting the momentum years earlier.

Along similar lines, those responsible for the Festival of Festivals have come to realize that there are Asian films of calibre. But from the number of viewers who attended the screenings, it is obvious that moviegoers do not share the same opinion. It could be argued, however, that one Asian American film, *Chan is Missing*, has done surprisingly well. But it was not marketed on the strength of its performance. *con't.* p.22

## ASIANADIAN AIMS

- 1) To find new dignity and pride in being Asian in Canada.
- 2) To promote an understanding between Asian Canadians and other Canadians.
- 3) To speak out against those conditions, individuals and institutions perpetuating racism in Canada.
- 4) To stand up against the distort-

ions of our history in Canada, stereotypes, economic exploitations, and the general tendency towards injustice and inequality practised on minority groups.

- 5) To provide a forum for Asian Canadian writers, artists, musicians, etc.
- 6) To promote unity by bridging the gap between Asians with roots in Canada and recent immigrants.



# "IN MIXED COMPANY"

## INTERRACIAL RELATIONSHIPS

prem ghosh

I met Jaswant (Jessie) and Marianne Khurana in their home near High Park in Toronto's West End. Their home is a monument to their teamwork. Jessie and Marianne are part of that hardy breed of Torontonians, who, by sheer hard work and perseverance, have fashioned comfortable and gracious homes out of yesteryear's picturesque masonry. Jessie, a Sikh from Punjab State in India, is an architect by training. He is presently working for the City of Toronto. Marianne is from Holland. She works part-time at the University of Toronto and plays the flute for the North York Symphony Orchestra. Jessie and Marianne have two children: a son, Vijay who is eight, and a daughter, Leila, who is five.

ASIANADIAN: How did you two meet?

Jessie: We met in the summer of 1971 at a house rented by a group of University of Toronto students. We both lived in the house during the summer. I was doing my thesis for a Master's degree in Architecture. Marianne was working. By the Spring of 1972 we had decided to get married. I wrote to my parents about it.

It was a bit tricky. For years my parents had been writing to me that they had found a "doctor girl" or a "lawyer girl" for me. Somebody who would be a "mint" (a real catch) according to them. I kept writing back telling them that I would look after my own affairs, thank you. In fact, they had been bugging me to get married even before I left India.

I wrote to them that I had met the girl I

wanted to marry. They took it very well. In fact, they were quite pleased. At least, one half of what they had been bugging me about was settled.

Marianne: My parents were very pleased when I wrote home to say that I was getting married. Of course, they had not met Jessie. By my father had been doing yoga for years and was interested in Indian philosophy and culture. He thought it was great that I was marrying an Indian, no matter who. He was interested in meeting a real live East Indian.

ASIANADIAN: How did your father develop an interest in Indian Philosophy?

Marianne: My father had a doctor friend whose mother was Indian and whose father was Dutch. The doctor was brought up in Holland. There is a very interesting story about him. It concerns the time he went on a visit to India. When his ship docked in an Indian port (I don't know the name of the port) he went ashore for a walk. Someone just walked up to him and said "The Master wants to see you". This man then led the doctor to his guru. The guru told him that he had a special gift which he should use. So the doctor studied with the guru for several years. He then returned to Holland and started a practice in which he combined modern medicine with homeopathic medicine. He also began to teach yoga. My father started to learn yoga from him about 30 years ago and he has been doing it religiously ever since.

ASIANADIAN: How about your mother? How did she take the news of your marriage plans?

Marianne: My mother was plain glad that



I was getting married. I was the oldest child in my family. My younger brother and younger sister were already married. I was an embarrassment to her, I suppose.

Originally, Jessie and I wrote to our parents saying that we would be going for a visit to Holland and India before getting married. But Jessie's parents wrote saying "why don't you get married in India?" and my parents wrote saying "why don't you get married in Holland?" We wanted to travel. We didn't want to waste several weeks planning and attending marriage ceremonies. So we thought "why don't we just get married and get this marriage over with and avoid all these problems." As you know it takes weeks to get married in India. Even in Holland you have to sit there and people have to come to the reception and worry about gift lists.

"Some one just walked up,  
to him and said  
'The Master wants to see you.'"

So we had a civil ceremony in Toronto which lasted ten minutes. Later, we had a big party for our friends in our apartment. Shortly after getting married we went on a trip to Holland and India.

**ASIANADIAN:** *Were there any incidents during your meetings with the two families which could be attributed to cultural differences?*

**Jessie:** The high points of our cultural differences during our encounters with each other's families have been for the most part humorous. The one that comes to mind concerns the food served at various meals in the two parents' homes. When we were in Holland with Marianne's parents, for breakfast we were served bread, cheese, jam, tea, etc. Lunch would be the same thing, with soup and may be smoked meat. I started bitching about two breakfasts a day. Then we went to India where you have a hot breakfast -- alu puri (crispy fried pancakes and curried potatoes), hot lunch and of course hot dinners. And Marianne started complaining about three dinners a day.

**ASIANADIAN:** *Now on another subject, your children. Are you doing anything about passing on your cultural heritage to them?*

**Jessie:** We realize that our kids are Canadian. But we do want to make them reasonably familiar with our individual backgrounds -- language and culture, so that if and when they encounter our cultures on

their own they are not total strangers to it. For instance, the physical contact with our relatives and the children has worked out very well. They have spent time with both their grandparents and have visited India and Holland.

Both the children are going to the heritage language programme in their school to learn Hindi. I don't want them to be able to converse with me on a day to day basis in Hindi. I just want them to know that it is not a strange language. And if and when they ever go to India on their own, they will recognize it as being the original home of one of their parents. And hopefully they feel the same way when they are in Holland.

We are at this time trying to make arrangements for them to learn Dutch. As soon as we are able to do this they will be going for Dutch classes.



**ASIANADIAN:** *What about religion?*

**Marianne:** We are not bringing up our children in any particular religion. But we try to acquaint them with different beliefs. We talk about them in a detached, almost academic way. We do not tell them what to believe. We tell them that all religions have a god. That there is always a medium like Buddha or Mohammed or Christ -- a being who was not a god himself but in between man and God. We do not tell them to believe in any one god.

I did not have a religious upbringing. Neither did Jessie. And we do not practice any religion at this time.

**Jessie:** I have taken the approach that when I need religion I will go to it. Not necessarily the religion of my forefathers but any religion that offers me what I need.

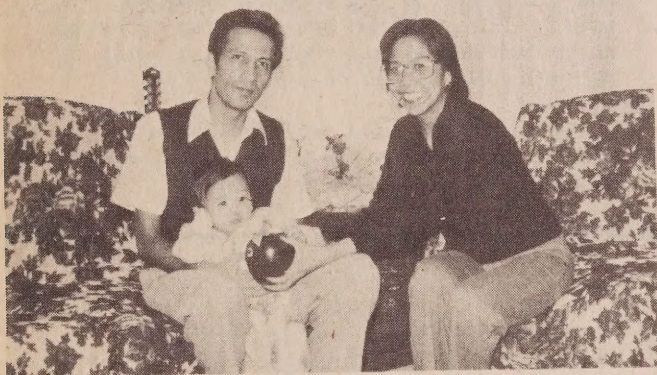


On entering the Nasir residence in Toronto's East End, one realizes immediately that this is no ordinary household. Interpersed among the memorabilia from the Philippines and Pakistan are awards won by Nasim and Josephine for long distance running, bowling, and chess. A piano and a guitar evidence a more than passing interest in music. Nasim Nasir came to Canada in 1975 and is presently employed as an electronic engineer. Josephine has a Business Administration degree from the Philippines and immigrated to Canada in 1968. She is an executive secretary in the Toronto branch of a large multinational corporation. They were married in August 1980, and sixteen months later a son, Michael Jameel was born.

ASIANADIAN: I suppose the best place to start is the beginning of your relationship. When and how did you meet?

Josephine: We first met in 1977 at a party given by a mutual Pakistani friend.

ASIANADIAN: How did your friends and families react to the relationship as it developed?



Josephine: Before we got married in 1980, two of my sisters had already married non-Filipinos--one married an East Indian and another an Ecuadorian--so it was not that unusual. However, Nasim used to go to Pakistan every Christmas to visit his family. My brothers were suspicious. They said "you'd better check on him, he must be married, he must be visiting his wife there." Of course I trusted him completely, but they were quite surprised and happy when he asked me to marry him. They suspected he had been married all along.

Nasim: I had not told my family or friends about Josephine, so when we announced our engagement they were surprised--pleasantly surprised--especially my parents in Pakistan who were getting concerned about their "wandering son".

"he can't be 'bi-religious'  
as we are bi-cultural."

ASIANADIAN: Josephine, you mentioned earlier that two of your sisters had married non-Filipinos. That sounds unusual.

Josephine: I cannot really pinpoint the reason why three members of my family would marry non-Filipinos. I know that most Filipinos would prefer to marry within the community. I suppose it is because the members of my family in Canada have mingled with people of different nationalities and I guess this exposure has something to do with it. I really don't know.

ASIANADIAN: Are mixed marriages common in Pakistan or the Philippines? In other words, would a relationship such as yours be unusual there?

Nasim: It would be extremely rare in Pakistan. The possibility of it, happening are remote primarily because we don't have the same sort of cultural mix in Pakistan as we have in Canada but also because most marriages are arranged through the family there and families would be unlikely to bring about a relationship such as ours.

Josephine: Interracial marriages are not rare in the Philippines. There are a number of mixed marriages between Filipinos and Americans and other nationalities.

ASIANADIAN: To get onto another subject, do either of you have problems communicating with your in-laws?





Nasim: No, not really because all our friends and relatives speak English but sometimes when her brothers and sisters get together there is a tendency to speak Tegalú and often when my family or friends visit we speak Urdu and on these occasions the other person tends to get left out of the conversation.

Josephine: I agree, but it is not a major problem.

ASIANADIAN: *With regard to this question of language, how will this affect your son, Michael?*

Josephine: Since neither of us speak the other's language we speak English at home so Michael will learn English but I would also like him to learn Tegalú and Urdu while he is still young. I believe children have a better ability to learn languages at an early age.

Nasim: I am not so sure that I want Michael to learn Urdu or Tegalú. I am afraid that it may lead to confusion in his mind and he may not learn to speak English well.

ASIANADIAN: *What about religion? Does the fact that one of you is Catholic and the other Anglican pose any problems?*

Nasim: Yes, it does create some problems. We were married in a Catholic church and Michael was also baptized there. However, I would like him to be familiar with the

beliefs of both denominations. It is a shame he cannot be bi-religious as we are bilingual and bicultural.

ASIANADIAN: *Do you have any general comments to make with respect to the question of raising children?*

Nasim: I think that this question of raising children remains the fundamental one to be resolved. On the one hand, we would like Michael to reflect the cultural roots of his parents but we would also like him to grow up normally within his environment. We do not want him to be torn between three cultures. Ideally, we would like him to make the most of his situation--to take the best that the three cultures, Canadian, Pakistani and Filipino, have to offer.

ASIANADIAN: *Do you have any particular insights to offer to another couples contemplating a mixed marriage?*

Nasim: If you do meet someone with all of the right characteristics -- the right qualities -- then by all means get married. Don't limit yourselves to people of the same culture. If you do marry someone of another culture, then you must try to create an environment within the marriage which is compatible with both cultures.

Josephine: This is a real challenge and there's got to be a great deal of give and take -- a great deal of compromise.

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### Face to Face continued

their scripts. They know the talent is out there. There are a lot of Asian actors around. We've got East-West Players in L.A., the Asian American theater group in New York.

*Have you started work on your next film? Can you tell us something about it?*

It's mainly going to take place in New York's Chinatown and involves an illegal immigrant who is quite young. He's from Vietnam but of Chinese descent. I guess you could say it's about the making and breaking of an immigrant. He is used by people and turned into a very famous fashion model, then when this immigrant begins to make his own decisions about what he really wants to do, they set out to destroy him. He is framed for a murder

he didn't commit. It's kind of like another version of this *Chan is Missing* thing, but it's going to be a stylized movie. The film shows how image conscious America is. Americans build images out of nothing and at the same time they can destroy the image just as easily.



**PELICAN PLAYERS**  
NEIGHBOURHOOD THEATRE

656-7075

Robin Endres, Artistic Director  
Lina Chartrand, Administrator



# racial harassment: individual reflections

editorial committee

The examination of the racial discrimination issue in Canada has been conducted in an academic--almost clinically detached--manner. This approach overlooks the deep psychological impact of racist encounters on individuals. In this article the *Asianadian* presents first person accounts of three Asians in which they describe their reactions to incidents of racial discrimination.

## 1 I couldn't believe it, this old man had punched me!

It happened all of a sudden, without warning.

I had just stormed out of the board of Education offices in downtown Toronto, and joined the rush-hour stream of pedestrians on their way home. I was incensed. A woman at the Board office had been rude and insulting. I was standing on the sidewalk still recovering from that encounter when out of the blue I felt something hit me hard on the chest. *WHAM!* For a moment I wasn't sure what had happened. Then I saw him: an old man in a rumpled suit. I heard him mutter something loudly about immigrants, as he stomped past me. I couldn't believe it. This old man had punched me!

I looked around--stunned. People were glaring --at me; not at the old man, but at me! I felt an angry burning sensation rising inside me. Shock turned to shame. I wanted to shout out to those around me. To convince them that I was the one who had been wronged--to turn their hostility in-

to expressions of understanding and sympathy. Of course, it would be futile. All the witnesses had disappeared and the old man was slowly melting into the crowd. I swore in his direction, but it was a senseless gesture that merely underlined my helplessness.

As I regained my composure, I thought: maybe the old man had had a bad day. Perhaps someone was making his life difficult. But it did not console me. I still felt crippled. Why me? What had I done?

I felt even worse when I recalled the incident at the School Board offices. I had just come out of a meeting with Board officials when I heard a woman's voice demand, "What are *you* doing here?" Perhaps it was my long hair. Or maybe it was my brown face. I'll never know. I retorted "I'm looking for the one and only black trustee, where is he?" That silenced her. She left in a huff, and I, still seething, left for my rendezvous with the old man ...



Experiences like these have convinced me of one thing: I live among racists every day. A Guyanese friend tells me that white kids don't pick fights with West Indians because there is a myth about them



carrying knives and chains. An Italian friend tells people he is with the Mafia. And when they call him "WOP", he pushed his fist in their faces and says "WOP" is "PCW" spelled backwards. They don't bother him very often. We "pakis", on the other hand, have neither the mythology of knives and chains nor the Mafia to protect us. We are always "open season". What can people like us do to defend ourselves? I don't rely on a knowledge of the martial arts or weapons, but on my heightened sense of place. I know where and how to sit. For example, I avoid seats near the entrances of subway cars. That way people can't take a swipe at me as they leave. I also sit in places where I always have a better view of others than they have of me.

This reaction may seem paranoid, but we have to keep our eyes open and our guards up at all times. We must also recognize that the agencies which have been created to protect us and deliver justice, don't always do so.

This is not very optimistic, I know. But that is how I feel today. Perhaps I'll feel differently tomorrow. I certainly hope so.

## 2 . . . one of them lunged forward and spat at me.

I was riding up the elevator from the apartment's laundry room with a basket of clothes in my arms when I was confronted by three boys. None of them could have been over twelve. They began taunting me and calling me names. I immediately reprimanded them and asked them to mind their manners, but they continued unabashed. I got off on my floor. As the elevator doors were about to close, one of them lunged forward and spat on me. A split-second later I stood there alone in the corridor, helpless, my hands full, the elevator gone, filled with impotent rage and shame as tears began to smart my eyes.

A few days later, as I was walking down the street to the

bus stop in mid-afternoon, a voice screamed out, "Hey you Paki! Everybody hates a Paki!" My eyes were glued in front of me and I kept walking, dragging one foot in front of the other. It was as though a hundred eyes were turned upon me. I could feel them piercing me from behind. From the corner of my eye I could see two young boys in the distance. One of them was black. Was he the one who had shouted? I was bewildered. Why should he be hurling insults at me? Was it that blacks had arrived and we Asians had not? Why was this little boy so full of hate for me? He was just a child, he probably attended the same school as my children. And yet he dared to assault me so loudly in front of everyone. It felt as though his action was sanctioned by public sentiment.



My reactions to these incidents were of shock, impotent anger, bewilderment and shame. I was deeply hurt. Nothing like this had ever happened to me. I was not prepared for them and did not know how to retaliate. I tried to understand what had happened through my readings of Canadian history. I found that each new group of immigrants had been treated in the same way by the dominant society. The Japanese, Chinese, Jews and Poles had all been subjected to atrocious treatment. I told myself that people of East Indian origin were just another new immigrant



group. We were at the bottom of the ladder now.

In spite of all the rationalising, I felt extremely vulnerable and began to live a life of fear. I was afraid to go down to the laundry alone. Before I entered the elevator I would check to see who was in it. If I saw a group of young people walking towards me on the street, I would hastily cross to the other side. I learned that the only way to survive was to be on guard at all times and to be suspicious of everyone.

When I look back now, I realize just how isolated and alienated from the world I had felt. I had reached a threshold in my life here in Canada. We had just moved to Toronto; I had no friends, no job, and a new baby which kept me at home all day. I had spent the first eight years in Canada acquiring credentials. Although fully qualified as a professional in my own country, I had been unable to find a job here because I lacked Canadian experience. For this and other personal reasons, I went back to university. One of my real fears at that time was "Will I finally get a job after this long and arduous preparation? Will anybody hire me?"

Months later, when I did start to work and began to feel accepted in my new profession, I used the same elevators, lived in the same building and did much the same things, but was too busy to worry about a great many things that had only recently hounded me day and night. I do not want to belittle the intensity of my feelings over the racial experiences I had been through. Because I was so vulnerable at that time, the incidents cut deep. But over time, their impact on me did seem to lessen once I settle down and started to get ahead in my career.

Is there any universal insight to be gleaned from these highly personal experiences? Many of those immigrants who came to Canada from Asia have had similar encounters when they first settled here. They

go through a painful process of re-defining themselves and understanding the order of the new world around them. They begin to see themselves through the eyes of others, as outsiders, in a society which sometimes makes them feel unwanted.

This self-conscious learning process in a new land is different from the natural development of children in the society of their birth. Children learn experimentally from their environment without questioning the basic mores of their society. Canadian immigrants, on the other hand, have to go through a deliberate learning process as adults. This re-education is disorienting. The larger society seems to take this struggle to survive for granted.

Immigrants can understand the trauma of acculturating. It is up to us to share our experiences and lend support to one another.

*name withheld*

## 3 I often felt rejected and racially discriminated against

My first few years in Canada as a landed immigrant from Hong Kong were difficult ones. Still in a state of culture shock, I felt self-conscious and insecure. I often felt rejected and harboured suspicious of being racially discriminated against.

In reading Canadian history, I had learned, among other things, about the head tax, the Chinese Exclusion Act, and the general prejudices prevalent in North America. This, coupled with the history of western imperialism in Asia, made me fearful--if the past was like this, could the future be much better?

Shortly after I arrived in Toronto, many people reminded me that the face of the city had changed considerably within the span of one generation--from being a predominantly WASP community of the 1950's to a multi-cultural society today. However, I was still



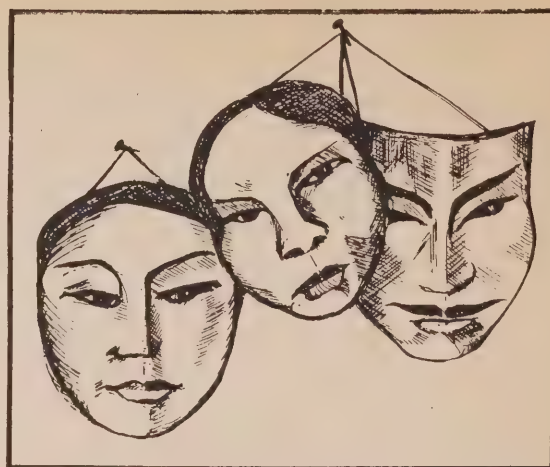
skeptical. People don't change that quickly. Today's adult Canadian born population did not grow up with Asians in their neighbourhoods. Since people are a product of their past, I felt that they couldn't fully accept us.

On speaking with sympathetic white Canadians about my feelings and suspicions, the first question they asked was, "Discrimination? In what way? A fellow Chinese immigrant, I suspect, would have had less of a problem in understanding my concern.

Later, I discovered that many of the unhappy encounters with Canadians which I had attributed to racism resulted more from differences in personality rather than my Chinese ancestry. I myself had assumed that race was an inescapable obstacle. I found that in interacting with other Canadians, especially those who know and trust me, I had attached more importance to the fact that I was Chinese than they had.

This realization has led me to believe that the assumptions we hold can often turn out to be self-fulfilling prophecies. Recent immigrants to Canada exploit people or you can pick the role of a victim to play reverse-discrimination. Of course, if you are a real winner you don't have to play games because you don't have bad feelings to unload. You will be able to deal with another human being with confidence and dignity.

People who have self-control and are comfortable with themselves are the most powerful. If we can devine who we are, and our self-worth does not go up or down depending on what others say or do to us, then it is very difficult for other people, racist or not, to up-



set us. In a way, interpersonal discrimination is highly subjective and often occurs non-verbally. What one person finds discriminatory, another may not. So, if you can handle it, it really doesn't matter whether individual racism exists or not.

My philosophy is, if I can deal with myself, I can probably deal with you. If I can deal with myself, my comfort will put others at ease. If we are not offering passive behaviour, others are more inclined to meet us half-way. Lately, I have changed my perception of certain types of people. There are those who I formerly regarded as difficult or have suspected of being racist, now I see them as harmless, challenging and interesting.

My attitudes and ways of coping with discrimination and perceived rejection have been effective for me thus far, but they may not be a panacea for everybody. What's required is a healthy self-image for self-actualization in a multicultural environment.

Alan Wang

#### HOW TO DEAL WITH A RACIAL INCIDENT

*The above three pieces examine individual responses to racial discrimination. What follows is a guide, based on a pamphlet produced the Parkdale Community Legal Services (PLCS) of Toronto, to help people deal with racial abuse. Our thanks to the PCLS for allowing us to use their material.*

The Ontario Human Rights Code prohibits discrimination against any person because of race, creed, colour, sex, marital status, nationality, ancestry or place of origin, with respect to accomodation, services,

facilities and employment, etc. The Code forbids harassment because of any of the prohibited grounds and defines harassment as "a course of vexatious comments or conduct that is known to be unwelcome." The Ontario Human Rights Commission is responsible for administering the Code and dealing with complaints under it. The Commission has the power to order compliance with the Code, rectification of any injury caused by a breach of the Code or direct compensation to be paid to the wronged party.

If you feel you have been the



victim of discrimination or harassment, you may file a complaint with the O.H.R.C. You must attend at their offices in person. Be specific and give them the details as clearly as possible

After their investigation is completed a Board of Enquiry may be convened to deal with the matter; you will be informed as to where the hearing will be held.

#### Violent Incidents

If you are the victim of a physical assault you did not provoke, you are justified in defending yourself against such assault. The Criminal Code outlines this justification as follows:

*37(1) Everyone is justified in using force to defend himself or anyone under his protection from assault, if he uses no more force than is necessary to prevent the assault or the repetition of it.*

DO NOT arm yourself with a gun or knife for your own protection; there is a stiff penalty for concealed or prohibited weapons. The best solution of all is simply to escape from your attacker.

#### Points To Remember

Take a good look at the assailant, Note the clothes he/she is wearing, age, weight, height, accent, distinguishing marks, etc. If the assailant had a car, note the license number.

#### Dealing with Police

If you have been the victim of an attack or were witness to such an incident, call the police immediately and request a patrol car. When the police arrive to investigate, answer their questions. Stay calm and be positive and cooperative. Do not say more than is necessary. Try to have a witness with you when talking to the police. Always ask the investigating officers for their badge numbers. If the police take a written statement from you, you will be asked to sign it. You may be required to go to a police station to look at "mug-shots" (photographs) in an

attempt to identify the offender. You may also be called to attend a police line-up in order to identify the accused. Try to take a friend along with you to these places. If the police lay charges, wait to be summoned to court.

#### How to Lay Charges

If the police do not lay charges, the onus is on you to act. Go to the Old City Hall and swear out a warrant before the Justice of the Peace. Make sure you have all your facts clear. If you do not know the name of your assailant, swear out a John Doe Warrant (for an unknown person). The Justice of the Peace will ask for a police report to be made of the incident.

#### Appearing in Court

When you are contacted with respect to appearing in court, be sure to ask for an interpreter if you have any difficulty expressing yourself in English. The courts are bound to provide this service. The case will most likely be heard in Provincial Court. The crown Attorney may represent the aggrieved party. There is no need for you to bring a lawyer to court if this is the case. However, you should contact a lawyer and be prepared to prosecute the case yourself. You should call the court office to find out if you need to bring your own lawyer. If you feel there is a basis for a civil suit against the wrong-doer, you should also contact a lawyer.

#### Complaining Against Police

If you are dissatisfied with the conduct or attitude of any police officer involved in your case, you should make a complaint as soon after the incident as possible. Register your complaint in person at the Public Complaint Commissioner's Office or with the Duty Staff Sergeant at any police station. Be sure to obtain a written acknowledgement of your complaint. Alternatively, you may send a letter of complaint to the Chief of Police.



# Dubious Award

On October 29, Federal Multiculturalism Minister James Fleming, released a set of government guidelines for the depiction of visible and ethnic minorities in government advertising and communications. They call for a more balanced picture of Canadians of all races in such things as posters, advertisements, films, textbooks and recruitment material.

In a speech, the Minister stated that the overwhelming image presented in the media remains seriously 'out of whack' with reality.

The *Asianadian* heartily agrees with the expressed sentiments and presents *The Dubious Award* jointly to the Federal and Ontario governments for their perception of the Canadian 'reality'.

LOOK MA, NO ASIANS!

## The Ontario Health Insurance Plan general guide



At last!  
Our own Constitution

Enfin,  
notre Constitution!



Canada



# What's In A Toponym

## — ethnic semantics —

leonard preyra

### Through the Look-Glass

"I don't know what you mean by 'glory,'" Alice said.

Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. "Of course you don't—till I tell you. I meant 'there's a nice knock-down argument for you!'"

"But 'glory' doesn't mean 'a nice knock-down argument,'" Alice objected.

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less."

"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."

"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master—that's all."

Lewis Carroll

*Question:* What do the words "Paki", "Chink" and "Gook" have in common?

*Answer:* These are some of the terms used to describe inhabitants or descendants from natives of Asia and, more importantly for the purposes of this article, are not found to be racially offensive by the editors of *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*. This, in a dictionary that prides itself as "the most reliable authority on the spoken and written English of today" is surprising, especially so when one goes on to read that the latest edition also claims to clearly mark all words that are found to be racially offensive. On further inspection of the 1982 edition, one finds that "Jap", "Wog" and "Nip" are definitely racist. As Alice would say, "the whole situation gets 'curious-er and curiousest.'" Unfortunately, this is not *Wonderland* and there are many Asian Canadians today who are very sensitive about semantics.

My interest in this subject is more than academic. It was aroused by a misunderstanding I recently had with a colleague over my use of the word "Oriental". She finds the term ob-

jectionable for two main reasons: first, she pants out, that "Oriental" is a word "created by non-Asians" and was "manufactured in the West" to refer to Asians, and second, "Oriental" conjurs up, in her mind, the stereotypical image of a Confucious-like character. A random survey of the opinions of some of my Asian Canadian friends reveals that a growing number of them are finding the term objectionable as well. A vast majority of them are Chinese Canadians. This, I find distressing.

The second argument is not examinable for the simple reason that much depends on the context in which the word is used, and the predilections of the individuals or groups to whom it is directed. I myself find absolutely nothing offensive with the term. In fact, it has quite a noble etymology. Joseph Shipley in his

*The Dictionary of Word Origins*, describes it in the following manner:

*The mariner turns toward the north star; the Mohammedan, toward Mecca. If we want to orient ourselves we turn toward the rising sun...Hence, the east... (p. 251)*

*The Concise Oxford* goes on to explain that to "orient oneself" means to determine how one stands in relation to one's surroundings." And that the word originates in the Greek *oriri*, "rise", as does "orientale", "orienting", and "oriental". Furthermore, Shipley adds that related to it are "origin", "Original", "first", "Prime" and "order". Thus, we can see that "Oriental" is one of a fine family of words and although it may conjure up "stereotypical images" for some people, its lineage stands in direct conflict with this conceptual (imagined?) shortcoming. As Humpty puts it the question becomes "which meaning is to be master"—that's



all. Whether "orientals" is to conjure up images of a people "turned toward the sun" absolutely certain of how they stand in relation to their surroundings or Confucius-like characters

"Confucius-like characters" is for Asians to imagine. Whatever one decides, it must certainly does not belong in the same family of offending words as "Jap, Wog, Nip, Paki, Chink, and Gook", at least not in my perception.

My colleague's second argument against use of the term "oriental" is more valid. There is no doubt that the word is a "creation of non-Asians" and... "manufactured in the West". However, consider the implications of accepting this reason for black-listing a word.

The generally accepted view is that the ancient Romans and Greeks and succeeding European imperial powers awoke to the sun rising in east across the Mediterranean and called the lands beyond "orient", "sunrise", "east". Later the terms "Near East", "Mid-East" and "Far East" dawned on them when the need for greater specificity arose. If "orient" is offensive because it betrays an externally imposed referent, surely these latter terms must also be objectionable for the same reason.

The explanation for the existence of imported toponyms in Asia is obvious. Up to W.W.II, most Asian states were colonized or dominated by European imperial powers. And it seems to be a "Divine Right of Empires" that the most powerful nations define, describe and name the world as they view it. This reality is not restricted solely to Asia.

Consider the toponym "Japan" or "rising-sun-land" which was bestowed by the Chinese. G.R. Stewart in his seminal work, *Names on the Globe*, points out that:

*...the actual inhabitants of the islands would hardly have given the...name, since they would have had no more reasons to associate themselves with the east or the rising sun than any other people (p. 293).*

Thus, if one is to criticize a toponym because it betrays an externally imposed referent, surely given the state of Sino-Japanese relations, to be called "Japanese" must be offensive to some people. A similar

objection can be made against the name "Philippines" which derives King Philip II of Spain, patron of the sea voyage which led to the "discovery" of the islands.

Steward, convincingly, demonstrates that many Canadian toponyms display "brandings of colonialism". Furthermore, Eric Partridge in *Origins*, discloses that "Canada" itself derives from "an erroneous interpretation of the Amerindian word "canada" or "canata", "huts" or "hovels", which the earliest explorers took for a place-name (p. 74). Should I write to my Member of Parliament castigating him for giving us Canada Day.

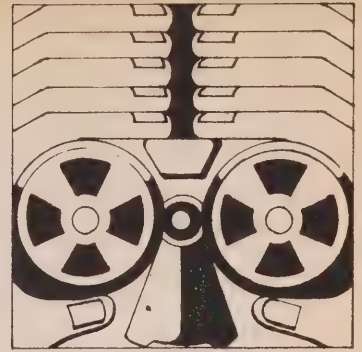


In summary then, if we are set about rejecting and replacing all of the toponyms which betray traces of colonialism, the task will be long and arduous. Steward points out that Canadian toponyms begin in the Maritimes with New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island and ends on the Pacific coast with British Columbia, Victoria and Vancouver. Far in the North he found islands named after King William, Prince Patrick, Victoria etc. Do we not have any Canadian heroes? Hopefully, in the not-too-distant future these will be replaced by the Macdonalds, Lauriers, Takahashis, Wongs, Singhs and countless others who have created this great multicultural mosaic we call Canada.

The author has been asked to remind Asian Canadian readers that the opinions expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the Editorial Board. Furthermore, those finding the article offensive may be pleased to know that shortly after stating his position, Humpty Dumpty fell off the wall.



# Face to Face



Dora Nipp

Thirty-three year old Wayne Wang is the co-author, producer and director of *Chan is Missing*, the first full length North American film to boast an all Asian cast and crew. It has been widely acclaimed by cinema critics in the United States and Canada.

The plot of the film is simple. It revolves around two taxi drivers, Jo (Wood Moy) and Steve (Marc Hayashi), and the elusive Mr. Chan, who, along with their \$4000, is missing. The search for this mysterious figure becomes analogous with the discovery of Chinatown, U.S.A. through the eyes of its inhabitants.

Asianadian spoke with Wayne Wang at the Canadian premiere of his *CHAN IS MISSING* in Toronto.

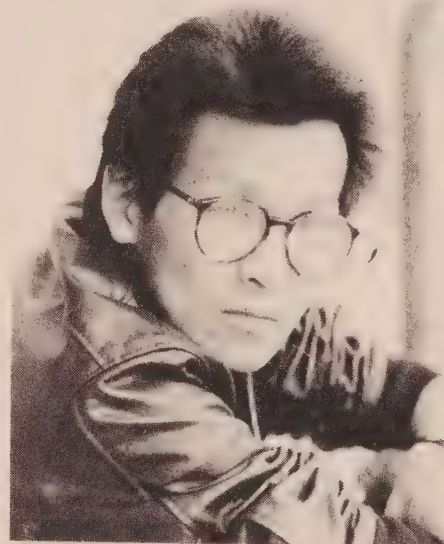
**ASIANADIAN:** What audience did you have in mind when you wrote the script for *Chan is Missing*?

**Wang:** I made it for myself. In terms of the audience I was directing it to, I'd say my first target was the Asian American of our generation. I didn't really have Asian-Canadians in mind, but then again I wasn't aware that there were so many differences between the two. Secondly, I was aiming for the general American movie-going public.

**Why did you decide to make this type of film?**

Actually, I wanted the Asian-American audience to see themselves on the screen in relation to a variety of issues in which they are involved. I think that while they are aware of the positive and negative realities of Chinatown, for the most part, they are too caught up in their own little worlds to be concerned with what is going on around them. The film attempts to put contradictions into perspective and force these people to confront one another. For the rest of the American audience I'd say it was quite obvious. I wanted

them to see Chinatown from the inside, and not in a stereotypical way. It is like English 1A or a basic reader to "intercultural appreciation".



*How much of your success do you attribute to the fact that you are identified as an ethnic director, and that your work is seen as somewhat of a novelty? It seems that things ethnic are the current trend, particularly in the arts.*

I definitely think it is a novelty -- there is nothing wrong with that. One has to capitalize on the novelty aspect. Nevertheless, I also feel that it does have some real basis to it. People are interested in learning more about the (Chinese) community beyond the usual restaurants and gift shops. Here they have a chance to bypass all the glitter and see the real Chinatown. In that sense I think it is good. The film just happened to come to the right place at the right time where the "novelty" of it is working positively.

*How do you see your film in relation to Maxine Hong Kingston's novels,*



and the "Shogun" TV series, both of which have proven very popular with North American audience?

I think this film operates at a different level. I hope that it isn't seen as being on the same wavelength as those two pieces of work. I feel that *Chan is Missing* is more gritty and down to earth. To me Kingston deals with a lot of mythology and Shogun stereotypes Asians. It is the novelty aspect of *Chan is Missing* which attracts people. When they do see it they find they are learning something about the Chinatown that we, as Chinese, know.

Was there a main message that you wanted to convey, one that you did not reveal to the viewers so that they could have the satisfaction of discovering it for themselves?

More than anything, I wanted the audience to make up their own minds about what happened to Chan. Obviously, I can make up an easy answer.

Do you know what happened to him?

Oh, I know... a lot of it is based on fact. All the things that happened to Chan happened to someone in real life. This person was kind of freaked out from the pressure he was under and decided to take off to the suburbs; to hide out for a while. But, you know, I could have made up 20 such answers.

Isn't the "answer" there? Jo, one of the characters in the movie, said he couldn't figure out the reason for Chan's disappearance because he was not Chinese enough and could not think in the Chinese way.

That's the most concrete clue in the entire film.

At one point in the film, Jo also says "What is not there is as obvious as what is there." This message seems to say that there is a need to go back to original values.

Well, the message calls for a way of thinking that is more Chinese. In the film there is a story about a farmer who couldn't pay back his debt, so he sent his daughter to his landlord. When she reaches the landlord's house, he presents her with a

"Some said we shouldn't expose our 'dirty laundry. . .'"

riddle. He shows her two doors. One of them, he tells her, goes outside and one into his own bedroom. But she knows that both go into his bedroom. What can she do about it? She says to the landlord, "This door does not go outside." She is using the negative to emphasize the positive. In that sense, speaking about things that are not there is just as important as speaking about those that are there.

I get the message and obviously you do too but how do you think the non-Chinese audiences will react to it? Will they understand the film?

I think most people are smart enough to get the answer. On the other hand many of them won't.

You've gotten favourable reviews from the media -- what is the consensus among Asian American audiences?

The younger generation pretty much liked the film, although some of the more critical people had difficulty with certain parts. I found that older people had a mixed reaction. Some said we shouldn't expose our "dirty laundry" while others were quite positive and felt it was about time something like this came along. And, of course, some people disliked it completely.

What "dirty laundry" were they referring to?

The infighting among the Chinese. Those who complained about this aspect only wanted to show how nice the Chinese are, what great food the Chinese have and how wonderful our art is. They only wanted to show off the good things without being very realistic about it. That's what they meant when they said "dirty laundry". But there has also been constructive criticism. One faction feels the film may reinforce the image of the inscrutability of the Chinese because of the way the movie ends. I feel this is a valid point, but at the same time I disagree because the movie is very concrete. I do think that inscrutability does have its roots as well, and I'm showing this in a very specific way. To me there is a balance between the two. A lot



also depends on the audience -- what may be inscrutable to one person could be perfectly obvious to another. You'd probably have a better understanding of *Chan is Missing* if you are part of both cultures. You'd have an advantage over someone who doesn't.

How do you see yourself, -- as an Asian, American, or Asian American?

Probably a little bit more than all that. I'm Chinese American hyphenated with Hong Kong roots. I see a slight difference there. I was basically brought up in Hong Kong, and Hong Kong is very much a part of me. It's my "home-town", and part of my culture. Yet at the same time I've become extremely Chinese American.

**"What is not there is just as important as what is. . ."**

Do you think there is an "Asian American" culture?

I definitely think there is, but it's hard to put your finger on it. For quite a while now, I've been trying to photograph what "Asian American Culture" is because it is easier to capture "it" visually. One has to start somewhere and I decided to begin there. I see Asian American culture in the way Asian American dress -- not "quite East and not quite West". I see Asian American culture in the language we use -- I speak half in Chinese and half in English in the same sentence. In terms of life-style, I think that would fit the definition of Asian American culture as well, but again it is difficult to pinpoint. I've been living with friends who are very American, but how and what they eat is very Chinese. Yes, it is hard to define, but when you isolate one particular incident or aspect, and you really look at it, I'm sure you'll be able to find a lot.

Am I speaking with Wayne Wang the social activist or Wayne Wang the director?

Social activist, no. But I have been through that. At one time I was doing a lot of social work. I see myself as a film-maker. I think that a film-maker is never completely detached from his or her environment

or from issues that are of social importance. In that sense, I think that social issues are very significant to the film-maker. Ten years ago, when I made my first feature film I was really upset with it because I felt it reflected a very unhealthy person. So, I stopped making films. I feel that *Chan is Missing* reflects a different attitude, one that I like and can deal with. A film-maker has to have political consciousness, it is important. That's why I don't believe that I'm a film-maker purely for artistic reasons. Film-making is always related to social and political issues, and my film is a reflection of that belief.

Is it possible for a film-maker to maintain that position and still do well commercially?

I've been learning how. *Chan is Missing* has progressively become mass-oriented, so to speak. Yet at the same time, it possesses a strong socio-political consciousness. What I'd really like to do is make two different kinds of films at the same time. I don't think too many film-makers have been able to do that. I want to go to Hollywood to make commercial movies with an edge to them and at the same time continue making \$20-30,000 features. By doing the first, I can afford to continue making exactly the kind of films I want.

**"Americans build images out of nothing . . . and . . . destroy them as easily . . ."**

Do you think the North American audience is ready to see Asian actors and actresses on the screen or accept them into their living-room?

At first I didn't think so, but apparently they are. We have only played in major urban centres such as New York, San Francisco and L.A., but we've had a lot of people coming to see it.

What direction do you see Asian actors taking?

Take Marc Hayashi, for example, he is obviously talented and people are seeing this. Hopefully, more writers will include Asian parts in

continued on page 5



# india bazaar at the crossroads

satish dhar



Shop signs to trip an Anglo-Saxon tongue

Photos courtesy of Pardesi Punjab

"There's no place like this in North America. There are Greek towns, little Italys and Chinatowns in many cities but nowhere else on this continent will you find another India Bazaar like Toronto's."

These were the proud words of the Indian merchant who took me around the Gerrard-Coxwell shopping strip in Eastend Toronto known variously as India Bazaar, India Town, India Market.

The merchant's claim was no idle boast. It was Saturday afternoon. The sidewalks were crowded with streams of pedestrians and groups of bystanders in earnest conversation. One animated conclave had even spilled over onto the street, causing traffic to swerve and agitated heads to pop out of passing cars. Overhead shop signs to trip an Anglo-Saxon tongue jostled for attention: Naaz, Moti, Mahal, Manzil, Kesri ... The air was thick with the aroma of Indian cooking. From one of the shops ripples of a long forgotten song filtered out and lapped at the edges of my hearing.

As my senses soaked in these familiar sights, sounds and smells, I felt a sudden gust of nostalgia tugging me away. But only for a moment. The unmistakable clang and clatter of a Toronto Transportation Commission streetcar on its way downtown rudely shook me out of my reverie.

The illusion was over. I looked around. I could see that India Bazaar was a commercial enclave covering three blocks - some forty shops in all. There were about a dozen restaurants, ten sari shops, half-a dozen grocery stores, several video and record stores, a few appliance stores and a cinema-shopping mall complex.

In addition there were also a few non-Indian shops unobtrusively sandwiched in between.

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All this proliferation of Indian commercial enterprises has not happened overnight. It is the result of ten years of steady, at times feverish, growth.

What will the next ten years bring? What are the prospects of Indian Bazaar? In an effort to find out I talked to bazaar merchants, community workers, residents groups in the area, race relations officials, policemen as well as knowledgeable people within the Indian community. I came to the conclusion that India town is at the crossroads. New challenges confront it as it goes into its second decade. Whether the area becomes a flourishing part of Toronto's commercial landscape will depend upon the adaptability of the India Bazaar merchants to changing circumstances and the support extended to it by the Indian community.

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Ironically, at the beginning, the Indian community as a whole did not stand behind the bazaar. When Gyan Naz, a professional engineer, established the first Indian enterprise in the area, Naaz Cinema, his middleclass fellow countrymen berated him for choosing the Gerrard-Coxwell location. They pointed out that this part of Toronto-Riverdale - was made up of a stable Anglo-Saxon working class neighbourhoods with no Indian population to speak of. Also, the shopping strip was a depressed area with run-down stores and a high number of vacancies.

Even the old Eastwood Theatre which Naz had converted into a Hindi cinema hall had been through several incarnations without attaining commercial salvation; by turns an English, Italian and Greek cinema hall, it was vacant when Naz bought it. Many in the East Indian community were convinced that Naz had made a mistake - the whole area was unsuitable for business. There was a feeling that Naz had somehow let the Indian community down by locating his cinema in such a depressed area.

### "a blockbuster superhit Hindi film"

However, this carping had little effect on the avid Indian moviegoers. They flocked from all over Toronto and beyond to lose themselves in the latest cinematic fantasies woven by their beloved film stars.

They had few other places to go to for Indian style entertainment. Naaz cinema was the only regular game in town. In fact, when it opened, it was the first commercial Indian movie theatre in North America.

The opportunities offered by the throngs that congregated in front of Naaz cinema were not lost on aspiring Indian entrepreneurs. As Naz put it: one week after the showing of a "blockbuster, superhit Hindi film" a new Indian store would open its doors. At first, businesses clustered around the theatre, but by 1975 shops had begun to open in adjoining blocks. India Town was on its way.

In retrospect, the fears of the critics regarding the choice of Gerrard Street as the location for Indian businesses were misplaced, even a bit perverse. It was precisely because the area was economically depressed that Indian businesses found it attractive. Being recent immigrants to Canada, their financial resources were limited. They

could only afford commercial properties at the lower end of the price scale. In the early 1970s, stores in the Gerrard-Coxwell shopping strip were among the cheapest in Toronto - some were selling for as little as \$20,000.

The first Indian merchants who moved into the area were not particularly concerned about the run-down character of the properties. They did things as cheaply as possible - no renovation, inexpensive merchandise, makeshift display. Low overhead: that was their watchword. Thus, the restaurants modelled themselves on fast food "bazaar stalls" of northern India. Pre-prepared spicy and sweet snacks were served to standing customers. Similarly, sari shops and record stores catered to the impulse buyer: inexpensive merchandise for mass taste.



This suited the working class shoppers, who frequented Gerrard Street, just fine. Inspired bargain hunters at the best of times, they found India Town shops had the lower prices compared to Indian shops in other areas. Indeed the "bazaar stall" atmosphere of the shops made them feel right at home.

The established professional class of Indian immigrants, however, kept largely aloof. They felt that the shops did not cater to their more cosmopolitan tastes and they found the run-down condition of the shops unattractive. For many of them this impression of the area has remained. They are still not frequent visitors to the area.

In the last few years, however, many changes have occurred in Indian Bazaar. For instance, the restaurants are now graced with chairs and tables; two even have liquor licenses. The food served



## It has become a symbol of the Indian community in Toronto.

no longer has an experimental quality. The merchandise in the sari shops and appliance stores is more varied. Many shops show signs of having been subjected to some homespun renovation.

Two of the more successful enterprises have made major investments in reconstruction and expansion of their establishments. Milan's, which started as a sari and gift shop, has now expanded into a brightly lit modern department store. Naaz Cinema has been renamed Naaz Centre - a 550 seat cinema hall on the first floor and a small mall on the ground floor. A fashion store has also recently completed renovations. The last few years of renovation and rebuilding has, it is estimated, cost the storeowners about \$1.5 million. Commercial property values in the area value in the area have also gone up considerably - from \$20,000 in early 1970s to about \$80,000 - 100,000 in 1981.

In other words, the area has been upgraded and revitalized. The businessmen have tried to overcome some of the stigma attached to their surroundings. But with all these improvements, the original character of the shopping strip has not changed; it still maintains the "Indian Bazaar" ambience of its early years.

The area is now more than a market serving people of Indian origin. It has become the symbol of the Indian community in Toronto, its largest visible public expression. But for it, the Indian community, with its over 100,000 members, dispersed throughout the greater Metro area and fragmented into scores of religious and regional associations, would largely be an abstraction, without a collective presence.

Indians come to Gerrard Street not just to shop but to air their nostalgia, to listen to familiar music and familiar tongues. For women who feel uncomfortable in Western dresses and conspicuous in Indian clothes in other parts of the city, India Town is a special place. Here they can wear the clothes they love: salwar kameez or sari or any other Indian costume without feeling self-conscious.

In spite of the important status it has now attained in the Indian community - there is nervousness in India Town. Many merchants feel that its commercial eminence is far from guaranteed. Certain

developments in the last few years lead to this conclusion.

To begin with, the South Asian population in the Toronto area is now growing very slowly. The present more restrictive immigration policy has reduced the influx to a trickle; at the same time competition for this market is increasing relentlessly. According to one estimate, there are more than 250 shops and restaurants in the Toronto area alone catering to the specialized needs to the Indian population. Some definable clusters of Indian shops are emerging in close proximity to areas where there are concentrations of Indian residents. India Town, with no supporting neighbourhood Indian population, has to compete with stores which serve their local area.

One of the big attractions of the Gerrard-Coxwell Indian shops was their low prices because of depressed property value and low rents in the area. This is no longer the case. Prices now are generally at par with Indian shops across the city.

The other major attraction was Naaz cinema. In the last few years, the ready availability of video cassettes of Indian movies has played havoc with the Indian cinema market in North America. Many cinema halls in Toronto have closed. The throngs which used to collect outside Naaz cinema are now a thing of the past. Even the complete modernisation of the cinema hall, has not brought back the large crowds of yester-year.

The recent recession has also taken its toll. The number of East Indian tourists visiting the area declined this year. Many restaurants reported reduced business. This decline in sales could not have come at a worse time for the businessmen of India Town. Two of the star attractions of the area; Milan's and Naaz Centre have just completed major rebuilding projects. The recent high interest rates must be cutting the profit margins of the owners of these stores to the bone.

Many of the more perceptive merchants on the street are convinced that they have to change their marketing strategy in order to remain commercially viable. The old unadventurous formula on which the area flourished, that is "marketing nostalgia" for Indian immigrants at the lower-end of the income scale, is no longer adequate to ensure future growth.



They are now trying to appeal to a broader market i.e., the more affluent class of Indians as well as the general population of the city.

This will require higher quality merchandise, sensitivity to latest twists and turns in fashion, introduction of culinary styles in the restaurants which will appeal to a more demanding clientele. In some cases, it will also require a more fastidious attitude towards hygiene. Further upgrading of shops would certainly help; some of the stores are still uninviting and these cast their shadow on the others which have been improved.

Several shopkeepers are already working toward broadening their appeal. Fashion boutiques are making their appearance - offering traditional clothing styles adapted to modern needs. Similarly, the last few years two air-conditioned restaurants have opened which serve cosmopolitan Indian fare, more in line with Indian restaurants in the rest of the city.

There is an awareness emerging among the shopkeepers that the overall visual quality of the shopping strip must be improved. This calls for collective rather than individual initiative. The property owners in the three block area have banded together to form what is known as a Business Improvement Area. Set up under Ontario Government legislation, this permits the establishment of a fund, as agreed by the merchants, to be used for public improvements. A Board of Governors, made up of area storekeepers and city representatives has been set up to administer the fund and make decisions on the improvements.

There was much skepticism in the beginning about the merchants being able to get their act together sufficiently to undertake this program. The previous businesspersons association, INPAKTA (Indian-Pakistani Traders Association), formed to deal with common problems, had become defunct from disuse.

However, the businessmen have obtained approval of the Businessment Improvement Area designation from the city. Inexplicably, it took 10 months for the merchants to complete the list of nominations for the Board of Governors indicating that the ghost of disunity has not been completely exorcised.

A budget of \$10,000 has been approved for

the first year of operation. This will be spent on street furniture, landscaping and promotion. A name for the area has been selected: India Bazaar. This name, along with a logo, the design which is the subject of a competition in local schools, will be used in all packaging and promotion by area business. It is hoped this will facilitate the creation of a recognizable corporate image of India Bazaar. The city, for its part, has agreed to plant trees on the sidewalks. By these improvements, the merchants hope to overcome some of the reputation of the shopping strip as run-down and visually unappealing.

Another issue related to location that the business association may have to look at in future is the relationship between their commercial enclave and the residential community around it. Right from the start, India Town has been an anomaly in that the surrounding population is not Indian. Ethnic shopping areas in Toronto have traditionally emerged to service nearby ethnic neighbourhoods. There has, therefore, been little conflict between the needs of the shopping districts and the residential areas.

## Things got very bad in May 1980

One of the major sources of friction between the area residents and the Indian business community is traffic and parking. This is because almost all shoppers come to this area by car. Week-end peaks are particularly irksome to the residents. Many of the residents also feel that their shopping strip has been alienated from them. They have no use for most of the merchandise on sale in the Indian stores. The shoppers are all outsiders to the area and their public behaviour as well as the language they speak is foreign to the residents. They do not feel at home on their own street.

Partly because the interests of the shopkeepers and the area residents are so far apart, the area became a fertile ground for racial conflict in the seventies. The Ku Klux Klan and the white supremacist Western Guard operated in this area. While racist attacks have declined in recent years, there was a time when gangs of white youths (most of them outsiders) would rampage through the street hurling racial insults, breaking shop windows, slashing car tires and beating up shopowners and customers. Things got so bad in May 1980



... they can look forward to the next decade with optimism.

that the merchants were afraid to leave their stores.

These incidents received a great deal of news and editorial coverage. Toronto Police Chief Ackroyd toured the area at the height of the tension, as did the Mayor Sewell. The area has generally been quiet since then.

There is some feeling among police and community workers that if the businesspersons had assertively presented a united front to the offenders, the racial incidents would not have escalated to the level they did. In fact, if the troublemakers knew that violence perpetrated by them would meet painful physical response or relentless legal action, they would have lost much of their courage.

The merchants, on the other hand, are bitter about lack of police action in those dark days. Taunts by youths, evidence of broken shop fronts and slashed tires did not bring the response from the police that shopkeepers expected. The merchants felt that the policemen, instead of taking action, allowed themselves to be imprisoned by procedural niceties.

It seems clear, that in the future, the businessmen will have to take a concerted, aggressive stand to combat racist incidents. But they must also make efforts to establish links with the residential community so that problems causing friction can be identified and dealt with promptly.

There has been some liaison between the store owners and the community in the past. The first public meeting attended by resident groups and the Indian shopkeepers was in late 1980. Some 200 members of the Ward 8 Ratepayers Association met with about 30 Indian businesspersons. To the surprise of many people, it was a cordial meeting. There was a frank airing of grievances on both sides. Residents expressed concern about traffic, parking, loitering on the sidewalks, sanitary problems in the lanes. The merchants mentioned the indignities they had to suffer at the hands of the less tolerant residents. Unfortunately, this initiative was allowed to lapse through inaction on both sides. In fact, the executive of the ratepayers group was not in favour of continuing the liaison, and the then president, Mr. Bower, partly because of this position of the executive, did not seek re-election. This shows that some

influential residents in the area have not accepted the Indian business area.

A more creative and dynamic approach is necessary to deal with intercultural problems. Active participation of people on all sides is required so that real world issues can be defined and solutions found. Rather than wallowing in resentment against one another, each group has to deal with the other. It is in the context of everyday life and experiences gained in solving specific problems that a new balance is struck, new lessons learned and new attitudes created.

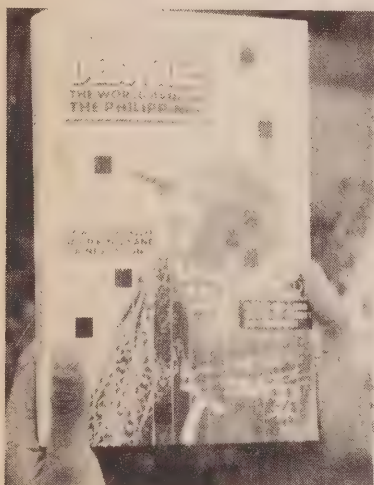
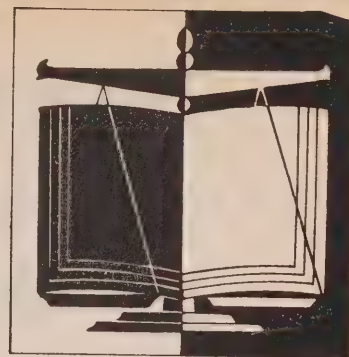
This seemed to have been the thinking behind the setting up of a new residents association, the Gerrard-Coxwell Residents' Association, which was formed in the summer of 1980. Its basic purpose was to resolve the traffic and parking problems on local streets resulting from an influx of shoppers to Indian Bazaar area. The Indian merchants joined forces with the Association and successfully lobbied city council for a \$5,000 grant to cover the expenses of supervising a local school parking lot for use by bazaar shoppers.

This sort of liaison needs to be developed. For their part, the Indian merchants should try to cater to the needs of the area residents and actively promote the bazaar in the local community. While this may not be easy, it may be to the businessmen's advantage. It may help to improve sales during the week when the bazaar is in the doldrums. Some progress has been made in this regard already. The two licensed restaurants are beginning to be treated by some area residents as neighbourhood taverns. A few of the younger more adventurous residents have started patronizing the Indian restaurants.

Thus, the Indian Town merchants seem to be taking the first steps towards meeting the challenges of the future: that is broadening their marketing strategy and improving their liaison with the surrounding residential community. These challenges are less daunting than the ones they have already successfully met. Unlike the first few years when they just blundered along individually without sufficient understanding of the new world they were in, the merchants now share, however falteringly, a collective vision of the future. If they build on this shared sense of purpose, they can look to the next decade with optimism.



# Reviews



Walden Bello, David Kinley and Elaine Elinson (ed.), *Development Debacle: The World Bank in the Philippines*. San Francisco: Institute for Food and Development policy, 1982. pp. xiii + 256; paperback, \$6.95.

Many would like us to believe that the World Bank, in providing funds for developing (usually underdeveloped) countries is providing a service by helping them catch up with the world in the areas of technological advancement and social progress.

This, however, is not the case. With the example of the Philippines, *Development Debacle*, argues forcefully against this belief. In fact, it is the other way round. The deeper the World Bank is entrenched in the Philippines, the greater the latter's economic deterioration. The World Bank, as the authors maintain, ensures the unobstructed flow of foreign capital and commodities into the Philippines. In reconstructing the national economy of Filipinos, the World Bank stressed the labour-intensive industries and chemical-intensive agriculture, so that goods from U.S.-owned factories could be cheaply made and American chemical fertilizers would be widely purchased.

To ensure this unequal exchange, the World Bank also uses its political influence to strengthen the repressive apparatus of the Philippine government. Counter-insurgency measures have expanded in both the urban areas and the countryside.

To the working class and the peasants, the exploitative and repressive forces of the World Bank seem to be all encompassing. The authors further point out that the peoples' resistance movements are a manifestation of the extensive exploitation and repression which is over present.

*Development Debacle* is a powerful book for it demonstrates the linkages between underdevelopment, political repression, and insurgency in the Philippines. What is lacking in the book, however, is the human dimension of economic exploitation and political coercion. Consequently, it is somewhat difficult for readers to identify with the suffering of Filipinos. The chapters while excellently written and arguments well documented, remain highly academic. As a political tool to raise the consciousness of readers, the book fails.

Bobby Siu

## Editorial continued

In a back-handed shot, patronizing critics impressed upon the film's tight budget as its principle redeeming feature. Moreover, reviewers used such phrases as 'oriental mystique' and 'fortune cookie syndrome' when discussing Wang's work.

Although it seems that Asians are fairing better at the hands of the media... hence, majority, it is doubtful Canadians are ready to see Asian faces on the screen or to accept them into their homes.

If 'positiveness' is what you are seeking, this issue will be more your style...but do read between the lines.



# WIDENING VISIONS

## Third World Films at Toronto's Festival of Festivals

*richard fung*

Toronto's 1982 film extravaganza, "Festival of Festivals" was fraught with difficulties. Some films arrived late, others were blue-pencilled by Ontario's Board of Censors, and a few did not show up at all. By the end of the Festival, its programme had been revised so often that the schedules posted outside participating cinemas began to bear a close resemblance to cubist collages. Furthermore, many patrons complained about distances between theatres and delays in starting times while others found the offerings of the Festival "disappointing".

However, despite all the mixups and seemingly inevitable criticism, this year's Festival showcased a far wider range of films than ever before. The seven year old Festival has broken out of its West European, American, Australian orbit and appears to be well on its way to becoming truly international.

Last year, apart from the usual "Critics Choice" and "Buried Treasures" offerings; the Festival presented a series entitled "Culture Under Pressure" which featured Tizuko Yamasaki's *Gaijin: A Brazilian Odyssey* and a retrospective of works by Yilmaz Guney. This year, cinephiles were treated to recent films by Brazilian and Asian directors.

Of the nineteen Brazilian offerings, some, such as *Chuvos de vero* (Summer Rains) and *Eles nao usam Black-Tie* (They don't wear Black-Tie), were superb; others, like *Iracema* were notable but reflected their budgetary constraints; and at least one, *Terra dos Indios* (Land of Indians), a documentary about the destruction of native cultures, was topical but interminable. In general, these films critically examined contemporary international concerns -- political repression, uncontrolled

development in the Amazon, family breakdowns, nationalism, racism and sexism -- in a distinctly Brazilian setting. "It is not surprising that these works were unpopular with those Brazilians who prefer to see their country presented as "sophisticated, developed and democratic".

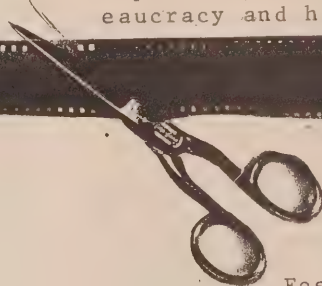
Of the eight Asian films advertised in the Festival schedule, three were Filipino, another, a Filipino-French co-production. Unfortunately, Lino Broka's *Bona* was the only one shown as scheduled. Mike de Leon's *Kisapmata* remained inexplicably mired in the Portuguese bureaucracy and his other work *Batch '81*

arrived on the final day of the Festival.

Pierre Rissient's co-production *Cinq et la Peau* (Five and the Skin) was caught in a controversy between Festival organizers and Ontario Board of Censors and consequently was not shown publicly.

*Bona* was eagerly awaited by Festivalgoers who remembered Lina Broka's *Jaguar* which was screened last year. Like its forerunner, it too is an allegorical melodrama, this time about a young woman who sacrifices her family and career to follow an insensitive macho movie extra. However, *Bona* also visually repeats much of what appeared in *Jaguar* and slides into mediocrity after some superlative opening shots of the famous Good Friday procession. Even the fine performances of Philip Salvador and Nora Aunor, both Filipino screen idols, could not salvage this predictable film.

It is not surprising that *Batch '81* has yet to be seen in the Philippines. Ostensibly about student fraternities in a Manila university, it is a scathing depiction of "the machinations of an authoritarian organization masquerading as an egalitarian one". Filipino censors





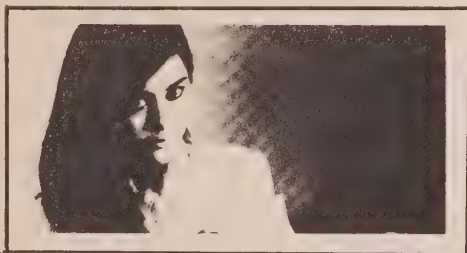


Batch 81

are demanding over forty cuts before it can premiere there. It is a shame *Batch '81* arrived late at the Festival.

*Cinq et la Peau* was one of two films at the center of the dispute between the censors and Festival organizers. The guardians of public morality in Ontario demanded that cuts be made to the Filipino-French co-production before it could be shown to Festival audiences. As it is Festival policy to show films only in their original entirety, the screen remained dark for the scheduled public showings. Festival Director Wayne Clarkson, in an impassioned speech, accused the censors of attempting "quite calculatingly to destroy the Festival", while Rissient added that the action of the Board aided the repressive Marcos regime.

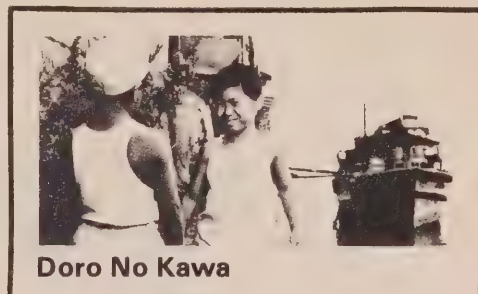
*Cinq et la Peau*



*Cinq et la Peau* is an honest, unpatronizing and informed examination of a foreigner's life in the Philippines. It is a difficult film intellectually and undoubtedly controversial; but, obscene it is not. In fact, far from being arousing or titillating the "offending" eighty-two seconds present a striking portrayal of the relationship between poverty and the marketing of female flesh. That the censors missed this crucial link in the sequence as they did in *Not a Love Story* demonstrates again that they are oblivious to the distinction between pornography and art.

Of the Asian films that did show, Japan's *Doro No Kawa* (*Muddy River*), an Oscar nominee for best foreign film of 1981, was most popular. Set in the 1950s, and shot in black

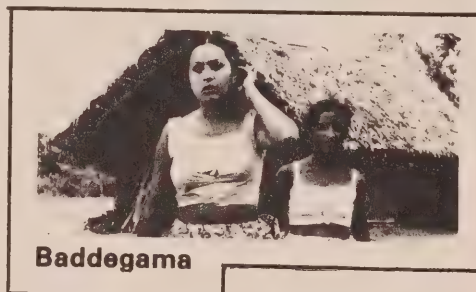
and white, this moving classic deals with a relationship between two young boys: Nobuo, a poor



*Doro No Kawa*

noodle-shop owner's son, and Kichii, the son of a widow forced into prostitution. With remarkable sensitivity and grace, Director Kohei Oguri explores the dilemma of nine year old Nobuo as he is forced to choose between social conformity and true friendship.

Interestingly, only one of the Asian films at the Festival dealt exclusively with rural life. Moving as slowly and effortlessly as the sun in the sky, *Baddegama* chronicles the woes of a semi-feudal peasantry in a small drought-stricken village. Set at the



*Baddegama*

turn of the century *Baddegama* exposes the manipulation of witch doctors, the tyranny of village headmen, and the inequity of patriarchy. Nevertheless, this film by Sri Lankan director Lester James Peries, based as it is on a book by Leonard Woolf, one-time British administrator, predictably portrays the colonists as benevolent but helpless and isolated.

Very difficult in tone and content, but nevertheless a good example of its genre was *The Story of Woo Viet* by Hong Kong's Ann Hui. A tight melodrama with touches of Film Noir, Kung Fu and mystery movies, the story tells of a young South Vietnamese soldier in a Hong Kong refugee camp. Hounded by murderous Viet Cong, he buys a false passport and an airline

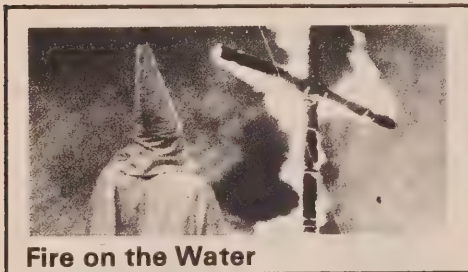


ticket to America. However, when his plane touches down in Manila his sweetheart, who has accompanied him on this trip, is kidnapped and sold into prostitution. The camera follows Woo Viet through Manila's sordid underworld in search of his lost love. *The Story of Woo Viet* is well-paced and skillful; however it tries to pull together too many elements at



**The Story of Woo Viet**

once. Moreover, it provides little analysis of the region's politics and reproduces visions of South-East Asia as an earthly hell, images which western audiences who have seen *The Deer Hunter* and *Apocalypse Now* have come to expect.



**Fire on the Water**

By ironic coincidence, the American documentary, *Fire on the Water*, also screened at the Festival, seems to address the question: "What if Woo Viet had made it to America?" Robert Hillman's production, completed only weeks before the Festival began, portrays the situation of recently arrived Vietnamese refugees in a small Texan shrimping town. As the shrimp stock depletes and overall income falls, tempers flare and white boatowners become increasingly hostile and make scapegoats of the recently arrived Vietnamese. Boats are burned as the Ku Klux Klan gets involved.

Hillman projects his film as a preview of a larger more in-depth examination of this situation which he will complete at a later date. Hopefully his second film will explore the impact of non-racial, political considerations on the dispute and also try to establish a link between

this particular conflict and American international involvement; elements which are sadly ignored in the original work. Nevertheless, as it stands, *Fire on the Water* is refreshingly unpatronizing and does not betray an ideological bias, two qualities rarely found in works of this genre.

About a very different type of situation, *Seputih Hatinyah, Semerah Bibinya* (*As White as the Heart, As Red as the Lips*) by Indonesia's Slamet Rahardjo deals with reconciliation in a large, well-to-do Djakarta family. This urbane work boasts a bevy of chicly dressed characters including: a psychologist daughter, forever taking photographs; a business executive son and his white wife and a sweet, just slightly manipulative mother who is the family's link with a traditional Indonesian past. Unfortunately severe sub-titling problems made it a difficult film for most non-Indonesians to understand. Rahardjo's first film, *Rembulan Dan Matahari* (*A Time to Mend*) was also screened at the Festival.

### Asian films . . . were not popular

Despite the novelty and obvious high quality of the Asian films presented at this year's Festival they were not terribly popular with the Toronto public. Even critically acclaimed works like *Doro No Kawa* (*Muddy River*) drew relatively small audiences. Apart from the usual problem with publicity, there appears to be a general ignorance among Torontonians of any cinema outside the "developed" world. Given the volume, quality, and range of filming which is done in the Third World today, this condition is regrettable. The Toronto Festival of Festivals has made a noble effort to change this. Hopefully cinemagoers and the Ontario Censor Board will take all the necessary measures to ensure that this trend is not discouraged.~

Richard Fung is a freelance writer and a Cinema Studies student at the University of Toronto.



# Community News

## URDU CONFERENCE

The First Canadian Conference on Urdu was held on the weekend of September 25-26 at the University of Toronto campus. It was organized by the Anjuman-e-Urdu, Canada (Urdu Society of Canada) in association with the Graduate Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Toronto. The two-day event was funded by the Federal Ministry of Multiculturalism.

The two-day event was funded by the Secretary of State - Multiculturalism Directorate.

Urdu is a language spoken in India, Pakistan and by a large population in the Middle East as well as by thousands of Asians who now live in England and the North American continent.

The morning and afternoon of September 25 was taken up by a conference on Urdu poetry. Scholars from North America and the Indian subcontinent participated in the various sessions. On Sunday September 26, there were several workshops on various aspects of the Urdu language.

The crowning event of the literary celebrations, however, was the Grand Mushaira held on the evening of September 25. Some 600 people thronged to hear their beloved poets recite some recent compositions. There were three well-known poets from Pakistan: Faiz A. Faiz, winner of the Lenin Peace Prize, and one of the most widely read Urdu poets, J. Aali, journalist-poet and banker who has a mass following in his country; Ahmed Faraz, rebel poet whose verse exudes a deep social conscience. From India there was Ali Sardar Jafri, literary critic, poet and moving spirit of the progressive movement on the subcontinent. In addition, about 15 poets from North America recited their compositions.

The Mushaira continued till three-thirty in the morning with the overwhelming majority of the participants staying to the end. It was clear from the response of the audience that, for Urdu-loving people of Toronto, the Mushaira had not lost its tremendous appeal, as entertainment and as an expression of mass culture.

## "SUBJECT TO CHANGE"

What is race relations? This was the topic of a play performed by the Pelican Players at St. Chad's Anglican Church (Dufferin/St. Clair West) in Toronto on October 1st.

Through the dramatic acts and creative dialogues among four actors, the disappointment, sorrow, and expectation of immigrants and native people were portrayed. This play, entitled "Subject to Change", was performed to stimulate discussion among high school students and teachers on racism, immigrant experience, cultural diversity and identity, education and employment. The scenes on the job search experience of a black youth were impressive. What is lacking in this play is a coherent direction where race relations should go.

## CELEBRATION OF THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VIETNAMESE ASSOCIATION

It was a cheerful evening at the China Court Restaurant. About 70 people came to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Vietnamese Association. The date was September 25, 1982.

Ten years ago, a small group of Vietnamese students started a social club, and it is a full-fledged service association today. It embodied the persistent efforts and leadership among the Vietnamese.

Mr. Don Nguyen, the President of the Association, gave a speech and offered thanks to members and volunteers. Contrary to our expectation, the food served that evening was Chinese.



(Contrast photo by Errol Taylor)

The conference was organized by the West Indian Social and Cultural Society and the Women's Research and Resources Centre, Department of Sociology, O.I.S.E. The forum was designed to provide an opportunity for women to discuss issues of common concern to them: in the family, in social life, in work and career advancement. This conference was one of a series of projects undertaken by the Society this year. It was attended by almost 150 women of wide ranging professional backgrounds.

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# TALKING BACK .....

We would like to hear the opinions of our readers so that we can improve the contents and format of *The Asianadian*. We would appreciate it if you could answer the following questions and mail them back to us. Thank you.

1. How did you obtain this copy of *The Asianadian*?

- (a) subscription
- (b) from a friend
- (c) at a bookstore
- (d) other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_

2. Which articles (features) in this issue did you find particularly interesting?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Which articles did you find the least interesting?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Please estimate the number of issues of *The Asianadian* you have read over the past few years.

- (a) one
- (b) two-five
- (c) six-ten
- (d) more than ten

5. What topics would you like to see included in future issues?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Should the magazine focus on a particular them (topic) for each issue, as it has done in the past (eg. media, women etc.)?

Yes

No

7. Would you prefer *The Asianadian* adopt a small-sized newspaper format?

8. In general, how do you feel about the tone of the magazine?

Too radical

Too academic (not enough on current events)

Not radical enough

It's fine as it is

Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Do you have any suggestions on how *The Asianadian* could be improved? (Use a separate page if necessary)

The following section is optional:

10. Which age range do you fall within?

- under 21
- 21-30
- 30-40
- 40-50
- over 50

11. What is your ethnic background?

\_\_\_\_\_

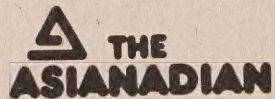
12. What is your occupation?

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